

Alfi o Cerami: Social Policy in Central and Eastern Europe: The Emergence of a New European Welfare Regime

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tries. There is sufficient evidence – including data provided in this book – to demonstrate that the pension legislation was drafted and amended by a very small group of government experts, with only token ‘consultations’ with outside groups. In sum, although theoretically intriguing, the attempt to link the ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ of privatisation to the actual pro- or anti-reform coalitions seems insufficient to demonstrate the actual causal connection between societal pressures and policy outcomes that would contribute to democratic consolidation. Furthermore, the final attempt, in the conclusion, to shift the focus of discussion to the international factors, such as the important, but by no means pivotal role of the World Bank and the IMF, unnecessarily weakens the central argument of the book that rightly highlights the domestic environment of policy making. Finally, even though the pension reform may not be the best test case for the consolidation of democratic rule in the region, this type of investigation is badly needed in our field. Hopefully, Hasselmann’s book will be followed by many more comparative and contextualised studies of decision-making in other areas of public policy.

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Notes:

¹ Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Ken Jowitt, *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); and Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (eds.), *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

² For a recent comprehensive discussion of the quality of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe, see the special issue of the *Journal of Democracy* (October 2007).

Alfio Cerami: *Social Policy in Central and Eastern Europe: The Emergence of a New European Welfare Regime*
Berlin, 2006: LIT Verlag, 274 pp.

In *Social Policy in Central and Eastern Europe*, Alfio Cerami takes on the tremendously difficult task of aggregating welfare policy information on all new member states of the EU and presenting his findings to discuss whether a new European welfare regime is emerging in Europe or not. This is a noteworthy effort. The task of the book is especially difficult granted the extent of problems that the new member states of the EU are facing in their efforts to seek a compromise between economic efficiency and social solidarity. To the extent that the Central and East European states (thereafter CEE) can establish and maintain such a compromise, their societies will benefit from European integration. However, so far, the picture of the CEE states in the EU is that their integration process is far from complete and – though at different levels – the EU integration process imparts a push for change in all new member states. Even widely-noted success stories, such as Slovenia and Slovakia, are reassessing their models of development: in the case of the former given the stagnating competitiveness of the country and in the latter due to the social costs of the strongly neo-liberal turn in the country in the late 1990s and the beginning of the decade.

Cerami seeks to underline the underlying thread of similarity in social policy making in all CEE states rather than discussing a limited number of them in a selective and more comprehensive manner. While this approach is methodologically acceptable, the reader lacks in-depth information on the outlying cases. In the end, presenting an overview of the problems that the new EU member states face in their ‘continuously evolving’ social policy during their transformation into EU member states and of the ‘developmental

path dependency' that they pursue (p. 85) becomes the main aim of the book. In this effort, Cerami still notes the importance of strategic interactions of economic, political and social actors and of the formal and informal rules that govern human behaviour. This is an important theoretical interpretation that the book offers. In the words of the author (p. 34), the book 'aims to compare different social policy theories and to elaborate new ones; b) identify the patterns of the welfare state's transformation in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic and Slovenia, at the national and EU level; c) investigate the attitudes towards social inequality in the European region; and d) explore the impact of social transfers in seven Central and Eastern European countries. Finally, this research aims to highlight the factors responsible for institutional change and democratic consolidation and to identify the prospects for the successful implementation of future welfare state reforms'.

While Cerami adopts a very demanding route to analyse social policy change, in the end he falls short of launching an analytical methodology to review all the cases under study. This may be a result of an over-reliance on secondary data – as the author notes – from European Commission reports, from Official Reports financed by the Consensus II Programme (1999), the MISS-CEEC (2002), MISSOC (2006), and from information available at the websites of various ministries in the CEE region. Therefore, the author presents a comprehensive set of knowledge on social policy in the new member states of the EU, but cannot go beyond repeating what is already written in the official reports. This is partially a result of the over-demanding goals the author sets in the outset of the book and partly the wide, region-covering scope of the work rather than concentration on selected cases.

The theoretical scope of Cerami's work is also noticeably comprehensive. The au-

thor introduces two streams of discussion around the theory of welfare and presents an overview of social policy under communism. In order to weave a conceptual net between these two streams, Cerami presents various discussions from the literature on path dependency, social policy vacuum, institutions and innovation. The theoretical thread in this discussion is the argument that what characterised the Central and Eastern European path of transformation was the situation of a social-policy vacuum, in which all social policies established by the command economy became obsolete and, thus, needed to be replaced immediately. Cerami (p. 85) therefore suggests that any analysis of welfare state change should, in fact, not only consider the crucial role played by historical legacies, culture, institutional structure, political organisations and social interactions in the 'path of creation' of modern welfare states, but should focus on the strategic interactions of economic, political and social actors and the set of formal and informal rules that govern human behaviour. This is one major contribution of the book. In order to support this argument, Cerami presents country overviews of the pension sector, health-care systems, protection against unemployment, social assistance, family benefits in all new EU member states from the CEE.

However, while the book summarises the social policy measures in the new EU member states, it lacks the analytical scope to discuss how these measures were affected by the strategic interactions of various policy actors or an interpretation of why such interactions affected social policy choices. While Cerami presents responses to the changes from some old public surveys, the book would have gained more in scope if we could trace the impacts of strategic interactions in a more clear and succinct way. Cerami concludes that Eastern Europe needs a more active rather than diminished welfare state: '[t]here can be little

doubt that welfare institutions have played and will play a crucial role in limiting the negative effects in income and social inequality. They have helped to reduce not only the negative repercussions of the economic shock, but have also helped to maintain a sense of public responsibility and solidarity, which has reinforced social cohesion during these difficult times' (p. 213).

At the end of the book, Cerami (p. 172) responds to crucial questions such as which patterns of transformation Central and Eastern European welfare states are really following. In this respect, the author raises questions as to whether the CEE states are silently acquiring the characteristics in force in the West or whether they are successfully adapting and recombining characteristics valid during communism with the new emergent requirements of post-communist societies. The response that Cerami (p. 173) gives is that CEE welfare states were by no means locked-in in their path of extrication from state-socialism, but were capable of highly innovative reform, which took place also in later stages of development.

In sum, this book presents a useful compilation of various social policy styles in the new member states and of secondary data on various socio-economic figures related to poverty, income distribution and social transfers, and some public survey results regarding attitudes towards a socially responsible welfare state. Alongside this, Cerami pursues a theoretical and empirical discussion that is convincing to varying degrees. Whereas the empirical data are widely available elsewhere, the book's theoretical discussion can be interesting for researchers on social policy in CEE.

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Maruška Svašek (ed.): *Postsocialism: Politics and Emotions in Central and Eastern Europe*

New York and Oxford 2006: Berghahn Books, 224 pp.

Emotional dimensions of socio-political processes have been attracting growing interest in anthropology in recent years. This collection of nine ethnographic studies focusing on Central and Eastern Europe highlights the role of emotions in various aspects of post-socialist transformations. The editor sets two main aims: 1) to contribute to a wider theoretical debate on the significance of emotions in politics, and 2) to advance our understanding of social and political changes in the post-socialist context by bringing emotions to the forefront of an anthropological analysis. The volume offers a number of interesting and unique ethnographies of changing property relations, uneven economic developments, dynamics of ethnic identities and inter-ethnic relations, transformations of local political structures and institutions, and reinterpretations of national history in various parts of Central and Eastern Europe. However, as a whole, it does not successfully accomplish either of its main theoretical aims. The analytical contribution of its focus on emotions is questionable, its 'post-socialist' framing risks essentialising and homogenising the region, and the authors' methodological choices are not clear enough, which makes the studies less convincing.

How can a focus on emotions contribute to our understanding of politics and the dynamics of socio-economic transformations in Central and Eastern Europe? A number of general claims about emotions are reiterated throughout the book: the focus on emotions is necessary in order to fully understand political processes; emotions are always embedded in contexts and socio-cultural, political-economic practices; emotions are formed through specific circumstances and emotions should be seen